

Crime and Older People

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Older people and their families worry about crime. Older people are often targets for purse snatching, pick-pocketing, car theft, or home repair scams. They are more likely than younger people to face attackers who are strangers. During a crime, an older person is more likely to be seriously hurt than someone who is younger.

But, even though there are risks, don't let the fear of crime stop you from enjoying life. Be careful and be aware of your surroundings. Here are some "do's and don'ts" that can help you fight crime and stay safe.

Be Safe at Home

- Do try to make sure that your locks, doors, and windows are strong and cannot be broken easily.
- Do check to be sure your doors and windows are locked – both when you are in the house and when you're away.
- Don't open your door before you know who's there. Look through the peephole or a safe window first. Ask any stranger for proof of identity before opening the door. Remember, you don't have to open the door if you feel uneasy.
- Don't keep large amounts of money in the house.
- Do get to know your neighbors. Join a Neighborhood Watch Program if your community has one.

Be Street Smart

- Do try to stay alert. Stay away from dark parking lots and alleys.
- Do keep your car doors locked at all times. Don't open your car door or roll down your window for strangers. Do park in well-lit areas.
- Do carry your purse close to your body with the strap over your shoulder and across your chest.
- Don't resist a robber. Hand over your cash right away if confronted.

Be Safe with Your Money

- Do have your monthly pension or Social Security checks sent right to the bank for direct deposit. Try not to have a regular banking routine.
- Don't carry a lot of cash.
- Don't keep your check book and credit cards together. A thief who steals both could use the card to forge your signature on checks.

Fight Fraud

- Don't be afraid to hang up on telephone salespeople. You aren't being impolite. You are taking care of yourself!
- Don't give any personal information, including your credit card number or bank account, over the phone unless you were the one who made the call.
- Don't be fooled by deals that seem too good to be true. They are often rip-offs. Check with the local Better Business Bureau (202-393-8000) to get more information about the record of any company before doing business with them.
- Do be on guard about hiring people who come door-to-door looking for home repair work. They may not be trained to do the work, and they may overcharge you. You should try to check their references. Always spell out the details of the work you want done in writing. Never pay for the whole job in advance.

Avoid Identity Theft

- Do keep information about your checking account private. Put all new and cancelled checks in a safe place, report any stolen checks right away, and carefully look at your monthly bank account statement.
- Do shred everything that has personal information about you written on it.
- Do be very careful when buying things online. Websites without security may not protect your credit card or bank account information. Look for information saying that a website has a secure server before buying anything online.
- Do check with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to find out how to protect yourself from common online scams that can trick you into revealing your personal or financial information.

You can visit the FTC website at www.ftc.gov, or call 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357); TTY: 1-866-653-4261

Elder Abuse — It's a Crime

Elder abuse can happen anywhere--at home by family or friends or in a nursing home by professional caregivers. Abuse can take many forms including physical harm, financial loss, sexual abuse, or neglect. Most abuse involves verbal threats or hurtful words. If someone you know is being abused, or if you need help, remember:

- You can help yourself and others by reporting the crimes when they happen. Reporting abuse is a moral as well as legal responsibility in most states.
- Contact Adult Protective Services (240-777-3000) for help.
- If you have been hurt, go to a doctor as soon as possible. Even though you may not see anything wrong, there is always the possibility of injury.

For more Information:

Elder Abuse—Montgomery County Adult Protective Services: 240-777-3000

Business Fraud—Better Business Bureau: 202-393-8000

Identity Theft—Federal Trade Commission: [www, ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov), telephone 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357); TTY: 1-866-653-4261